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ABSTRACT

These teaching units, designed for use at the high school level, focus on nutrition, housing, health care, and retirement. The purpose of the unit on nutrition, housing, and health care is to provide an inquiry approach by which the student may become more aware of certain problems of the aged members of the community. The student, upon completion of this unit, will be able to describe, document, and discuss examples of how the elderly are being isolated from society's mainstream in the economic, social, and cultural areas. The unit focusing on retirement is designed to help destroy popular mythology about aging, and is aimed at giving the student a first-hand look at retirement in general, and a specific exposure to retirement in his or her own community. Course objectives, contents and/or procedures, instructional materials, and evaluation techniques are included. (Author/KA)

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FOCUSING ON NUTRITION, HOUSING, AND HEALTH CARE

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RETIREMENT

by John Myers

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UNIT TOPIC: FOCUSING ON NUTRITION, HOUSING, AND HEALTH CARE

GRADE LEVEL: This unit, as a whole or in segments, is designed for use at the high school level, but may be effective for motiviated junior high students also.

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this unit is to provide an inquiry approach by which the student may become more aware of certain problems of the aged members within his or her own community. Specifically, upon completion of the activities presented in this unit, the student will be able to describe, document, and discuss specific examples of how the elderly in the community are being isolated from the mainstream of the population, in the economic, social, and cultural areas. Teaching methodologies used should be as varied and diverse as possible to allow students the widest range of learning situations possible. Selection of such rests with the teacher, based on class needs and characteristics and the particular characteristics of the subject community. Effective activities might include: class discussions, field trips, role playing, personal interviews, guest speakers, and student organized panel

groups and seminars. Students might be evaluated through the use of position papers, oral presentations or participation, optional independent treatment of case studies, or objective and essay type tests.

II. OBJECTIVES

Upon completion of this two-week segment of the course, the student will be able to:

A. List those related problems that are unique to the aged, preferably on an essay type test, and trace one particular problem and discuss possible solutions.

B. Turn in a menu that meets the required nutritional standards of HEW, based on the estimated average income of a retiree in the community (statistics are available from HEW).

C. Discuss the limitations placed on the elderly due to living on a fixed income as it affects housing and entertainment.

D. Identify those items which affect the quality and the cost of medical care for the aged.

E. Prepare a position paper documenting the major problems of the aged and proposing viable solutions for those problems.

III. CONTENT AND/OR PROCEDURES

Activities:

A. Interview family friends, relatives, and neighbors who are now living on retirement incomes and find out specifically what problems they are having related to their current status. (For examples of measuring questionnaires for this purpose and more detailed approaches to the subject of retirement, see the unit in this series entitled "Retirement."

B. Collect and analyze data looking for repeated instances of certain problems of the aged (newspapers and magazines and publications available from organizations concerned with aging may be excellent sources).

C. Using information from the Social Security Office, plan a one-week budget and follow that with a menu of meals for one week for the average elderly person. Note the percentage of the retirement income which goes for food.

D. Plan a field trip to a local supermarket and try to buy the week's food provisions, based on the budget you have devised.

E. Using information from segment one, determine the cost to maintain a house for a six-month period.

F. Plan a household budget, as complete as possible, for a three-month period. Include provision for entertainment.

G. Utilize guest speakers from utility companies to explain their procedures and costs. Elderly persons facing these dilemmas also make effective speakers.

H. Research the health needs of the aged.

I. Conduct a field trip to a nursing home to observe life there.

J. Organize a panel group to report on the costs of health care required by the aged.

K. Assign research papers, such as on the strengths and weaknesses of present health care coverage. The paper(s) may be presented in class.

L. Ask an M.D. who specializes in treating the elderly to speak to the class about health problems of the elderly.

IV. INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Instructional materials to support the activities suggested herein should consist of readings selected by the teacher (articles, book excerpts, position papers by recognized experts in the field), nutritional guides published by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, and retirement and Medicare supplements available for the local Social Security Offices in your community.

V. EVALUATION

If desired, a comprehensive objective exam might be presented at the conclusion of the six-week course. It might cover all material presented by panels, study by individuals, and guest speakers in class. Also, evaluation of processes, interests, papers, and panels would be acceptable.

UNIT TOPIC: RETIREMENT

GRADE LEVEL: This unit is designed for use at the high school level, grades ten through twelve, and is so designed as to be flexible in its timing. By deleting certain portions, the unit may run anywhere from three to six weeks, at the discretion of the teacher.

I. INTRODUCTION

The overall purpose of this unit is to help to destroy the popular mythology about aging in our society. In our youth-oriented society, the process of aging and its effects on our elderly have generally been ignored in the past. In place of a body of fact concerning aging, most Americans have accepted a highly distorted view of the process and the people whom it affects. Since eventually aging affects us all, and since the "problem" of aging is becoming a prominent topic in society, it behooves us all to have a factual understanding of what it is to be old and the effects of aging upon the individual. Part of the aging "problem" centers around retirement, and it is upon this subject that this unit focuses. This particular unit is aimed at giving the student a first-hand look

at retirement in general, and a specific exposure to retirement in his own community. Emphasizing personal involvement with real people, rather than dependence upon textbook examples, students participating in the study of this unit will come into face-to-face contact with both retired and nonretired older members of their community. They will find themselves examining their own views about aging in general and retirement, and clarifying those views based, not upon myth, but upon factual and relevant personal experience.

II. UNIT OBJECTIVES

By the time students complete this unit, they should:

A. Hold a more realistic view of the process of aging and its effects upon individuals in their community.

B. Hold a more realistic view of retirement and its effects upon the older people in their community.

III. CONTENT AND/OR PROCEDURES

It is recommended that the unit begin in the classroom with the text by Smith, so that, before going out to look at the effects of aging and retirement in his community, the student may gain a factual basis for comparison. Chapters I through IV deal with defining the aged and their various needs in our society. The author provides numerous examples of how the aged are affected by both the process of aging, and the attitudes of society toward aging. It is suggested that the teacher approach the early part of the course by defining the "mythical" aged stereotype (See attached short history of aging for characteristics). Students will readily contribute to a composite of what the "average" aged person is like, both physically and psychologically. With their appetites whetted, so to speak, the teacher then can introduce the actual characteristics of the aged and the process of aging. The reading and the discussion of the first four chapters of the text should be quite interesting to the student, since much of what he learns

will be highly surprising to him. Interest in the unit should be high, as the course is highly relevant, dealing as it does with a process which affects us all. An understanding of the process of aging and its effects should also help students to relate better to parents and grandparents, let alone to the prospect of their own growing older. Depending on the degree of student interest and the depth of knowledge desired, as little as one week or more than two might be spent in preparing a knowledgeable base from which to examine one's own community.

The class should complete the remaining chapters of the text, which deal with retirement and recommend changes and solutions for the aging "problem" in our society.

Activities which might be included in the unit presentation are as follows:

A. Students might design "ranking exercise" type materials to further assess attitudes. These materials could be administered to older members of the community and then compared for analysis. Teachers familiar with values clarification strategies might guide their students in the design of such materials, or might choose to design some of their own for class use.

B. Retired members of the community might be invited to address the class on the subject of retirement. Several speakers who have adjusted to retirement in different ways would make an excellent basis for comparison.

C. Speakers from local industry might be invited to explain their company's pension or retirement program to the class. A representative for the local Social Security Administration Office would also be an excellent resource.

D. Students could pursue, either individually or in small groups, specific areas of interest related to retirement or aging. They might research various retirement plans and pensions, or look at "retirement communities", or some other area not treated directly in this unit.

E. Students might pursue a community-based project to change attitudes in their community. They might see what programs for the aged exist and what the actual results of such programs are.

F. Students might embark on a simulation of aging and retirement. The teacher might use a series of five to ten year increments and ask the student to plan for his retirement, based on current rates of inflation, etc. If the teacher then raises the inflation rate, or introduces other factors which would affect retirement planning, at each increment the student may see the need for retirement planning as a process of constant re-evaluation. If the teacher chooses also to complicate the exercise by throwing in factors like depressions, corporate bankruptcy, or medical costs due to long-term illness, the student will gain additional insights into the realities of planning for one's "golden years." As a prelude to such an exercise, it might be well to invite an estate planner to speak on the subject of individual planning for retirement.

IV: INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Aging in America by Bert Kruger Smith (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) has been selected as the supporting text for this unit. This text is highly readable by high school students and gives a good up-to-date coverage of the entire area of aging, including suggestions for solving our aging "problem." If the text cannot be made available as a class text, then the classroom teacher will find it an excellent resource from which to gain knowledge for teacher presentations of the subject matter on aging and retirement. If no copy of the text can be located, optional materials may be selected from the accompanying bibliography, and the teacher may draw from the attached short history of aging in America. The Smith text, however, is available in paperback from the publisher for under five dollars per copy, or may be found in local bookstores. The text is approximately 240 pages in length. The body of material on aging is growing rapidly, and, for the deter-

mined teacher, there should be no lack of materials from which to teach. If the recommended materials are not available, there will be others equally suitable for the purpose, if not better.

V. CONCLUSION

This unit has been designed to be flexible for the teacher, and easily adaptable to time requirements, and to student interests. It is hoped that the teacher will not take it "as is," but will tailor it to his or her specific needs and the needs of students. Suggested procedures and activities are only suggestions, and may serve to provide the teacher with a basis for teaching the unit. It is hoped that each teacher will, however, leave his or her mark on the unit taught, and will plan effectively for its implementation. The nature of this subject of aging is such that the body of literature available is growing rapidly and new discoveries are being made daily. Accordingly, teachers are urged to remain current in the areas in which they are teaching, and to change and augment this unit design as necessary to insure the finest and most accurate presentation possible.

AGENCIES SUPPLYING INFORMATION ON AGING

(Clearinghouse)
National Center for Voluntary Action
Paramount Building
1735 Eye Street NW
Washington, DC 20006

National Council on the Aging
1828 L Street, NW; Suite 502
Washington, DC 20036

Administration on Aging
Dr. Walter Moeller
HEW South Building, Room 3609
Third and C Streets SW
Washington, DC

Retired Senior Volunteer Program
ACTION
806 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20525

National Retired Teachers Association
Arerican Association of Retired Persons
1225 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

Department of Mental Hygiene & Correction
State Office Building
Columbus, OH 43215

Division of Administration on Aging
Department of Mental Hygiene and Correction
State Office Building
Columbus, OH 43215

Local resources, see telephone listings